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ABSTRACT

To develop a theory of invention that would include both generation and selection of material for written composition, the four major current theories of invention were considered. Since only one--prewriting--included a selection component and was limited in several ways, a psychotherapeutic theory--focusing--was adapted to the composing process in accordance with the principles that underlie adequate rhetorical theories. The resulting theory, which focuses on the composition process, was field tested to extend and refine it and to develop methods for its use in a wide variety of writing situations. The theory and methods enabled writers to generate and select material through a single coherent and widely adaptable procedure. Five patterns for different kinds of writing--i.e., personal narratives, literature, assigned subjects, comparison/contrast and other essay development types, and persuasion--were developed. (Author/CRH)

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Focusing in the Composing Process: The Development of a Theory of Rhetorical Invention

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to develop a theory of invention which would include both generation and selection of material for written composition. Of the four major current theories of invention, only one includes a selection component, and that method is beset by several limitations. A psychotherapeutic theory, focusing, developed by Eugene T. Gendlin, Ph.D., was adapted to the composing process in accordance with principles which underlie adequate rhetorical theories. The theory which resulted from this adaptation, focusing in the composing process, was field tested in order to extend and refine it and to develop methods for its use in a wide variety of writing situations. The theory and methods enable writers to generate and select material through a single coherent and widely adaptable procedure. Five patterns for different types of writing and guidelines for using them are presented.

Invention, the first and most important part of classical rhetoric, is once again beginning to be regarded as vital to the composing process. In fact, the current, growing conception of composition as a process, rather than as a product alone, helps to account for the renewed interest in invention, though the revival of invention actually began nearly half a century before Emig's (1971) landmark study of the composing process (see Corbett, 1965). A process orientation to composition, emphasizing the acts a writer must perform, rather than merely analyzing and evaluating the results of those acts, must acknowledge the writer's need to invent, to discover what to write about. Though classical rhetoric as expounded by Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and others in many ways does not fit today's conception of the "process approach," the foundation for such an approach is inherent in its division of rhetoric into "parts" (invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery) which reflect what the orator did, not what the finished product was. Current process theories generally divide the act of writing into three stages: prewriting, writing, and rewriting or revising. The tacit assumption of such theories, and the textbooks based on them, is that writers will emerge from the invention or prewriting stage ready to "write," to set down in draft form that which they have discovered. Such approaches take for granted that not only generation but also selection will have taken place in invention.

Yet selection has been all but forgotten in the long history of rhetoric. Beginning with the ancient classical rhetoricians and continuing until the very recent past, invention has been seen solely in terms of generating material. The rare references to selection generally only involved choosing which arguments or parts of a discourse might be omitted. The emphasis of classical rhetoric on generation, and its neglect of selection, have been part of the paradigm which has shaped the subsequent theory and practice of invention. However, with the advent of a concern with process has come an awareness of the need for selection within that process.

In fact, Lauer (1967) has called selectivity the "most important aspect of efficiency," which quality, along with "comprehensiveness," is essential to a "good heuristic procedure" (pp. 142-144). Implicit in Lauer's discussion, however, and in most current theories of invention, is the assumption that selection does not require method, that it is the spontaneous result of having generated material. That such spontaneous selection does often occur cannot be denied. Many writers, however--especially students, who generally write not out of a desire to communicate but of compulsion--do not always experience such insight. In fact, many never seem to experience it, and their papers as a result are either general and pointless if they have not chosen a central idea to support, or trivial if they have.

The purpose of this study was to develop a theory of invention which would include both the generation and selection of material for writing in a single coherent process. The researcher began by exploring current theories of invention to determine whether and to what extent the major theories (classical rhetoric, dramatism, tagmemics, and pre-writing) include both generation and selection. She also explored the criticism on rhetorical theories and on the teaching of rhetoric and composition in order to determine the "properties of adequate theories" (Steinmann, 1966) and on that basis to set standards for a new theory.

After discovering that the major theories either do not deal with selection or that they deal inadequately with it, she set about to discover whether a theory in another field, psychology, might provide elements which could be used as a basis for a theory of invention in composition. The result of this search was the discovery of a psychotherapeutic theory called "focusing," as expounded in a book (1978) written by the developer of the theory, Eugene Gendlin, Ph.D., a psychotherapist and Professor of Behavioral Sciences at the University of Chicago. This theory, rooted in Gendlin's discoveries as a therapist, and with theoretical ties to the work of Carl Rogers and of Fritz Perls, proved to be exactly what the researcher needed as the basis for a new theory of invention.

After attending a seminar in 1980 on focusing conducted by Gendlin and working personally with him and with others through therapeutic focusing sessions, the author began the next phase of her research, adapting Gendlin's theory to composition. This adaptation, however, required far more than merely adding the act of writing to a therapeutic technique. The classroom context and the various types of writing for which the method might be used necessitated extensive adaptation which amounted to the development of a new theory in its own right.

The researcher decided that this study should not include experimental research on the theory but instead should incorporate extensive field testing in a wide range of situations. Only thus, she felt, could she formulate a theory which would be soundly conceived, and refined to the extent that later experimental study would be worthwhile and valid. This field testing continued for three years and involved developing and using focusing methods for many types of writing in classes that ranged from gifted elementary school-age children through a cross-section of people in a continuing education class. The two main groups of people with whom the theory was used, however, were college freshmen and teachers of composition in a Writing Project (two years) of which the researcher was assitant director. Through the researchers' observations, through oral and written comments from users of the method--both the Writing Project teachers and others--and

students, through the apparent results in terms of users' writing and attitudes, and through continued research in rhetorical criticism and pedagogical practice, the researcher was able to make assessments which helped in refining the theory and methods of focusing in the composing process.

This theory of invention is therefore the result of several types of research: historical and comparative research on current theories of invention; metarhetorical research to discover the qualities of good theories and on that basis to determine the criteria for a comprehensive theory including both generation and selection; cross-disciplinary research, finding and then learning to use Gendlin's focusing; "basic rhetorical research" (Steinmann, 1966) in the formulation of the theory and its methods; and pedagogical research, extensive field testing in order to refine and extend the theory and methods.

The Four Current Theories of Invention

Classical rhetoric, originally developed for the art of oratory, dated from the classical period in Greece and Rome. Though this rhetorical tradition was upheld for centuries, there was a long period in which classical rhetoric fell into disuse, largely because invention was no longer considered a part of rhetoric. However, the late 1920's marked the beginning of a renewed interest in classical rhetoric--and in invention along with it. Young (1976) explains that invention in classical

rhetoric was "designed to help one discover valid or seemingly valid arguments in support of a proposition" (p. 9). Classical invention began, he says, by determining the status or issue to be argued, and then discovered the specific arguments through the use of heuristic probes called topics.

The topics were essentially a checklist of ways to approach a subject in order to discover what one knew about it. Though they were questions about, or points of view on, a subject, they were also thought to be areas of the mind where arguments resided each in its own place. No two classical rhetoricians list exactly the same set of topics, but Aristotle enumerates, for example, twenty-eight formal topics (Rhetoric 2. 23), besides the material topics, common and special. Modern sets of topics abound (e.g., Berke, 1981; Corbett, 1965; Cowan & Cowan, 1980; Winterowd, 1973), and all of them provide "ways whereby the writer can 'walk around' a subject, viewing it from different angles, . . . probing it" (Winterowd, 1975, p. 90).

In contrast to the neo-classicists' use of the topics, the stasis system, classical rhetoric's selection component, has been almost totally neglected. The stases (from sta, to stand) were the standing still or stopping places in the movement of an argument, where the defense "takes its stand, as if it were coming to grips in a counter attack" (Cicero, Topica 25. 93). Even the stasis system, however, did not provide for selection among what

had been generated, but for a choice of which topics to use in order to generate material. Neo-classical rhetoric has barely mentioned selection, and most treatments deal only briefly with the need to "limit" or "narrow" topics. A noteworthy exception is the Cowans' text (1980), yet the guidelines for selection which are included in the neo-classical section are actually derived not from classical rhetoric but from pre-writing and related modern theories. Thus neither classical nor neo-classical rhetoric addresses selection in a form which is applicable to the diverse needs of current rhetorical practice.

Dramatism, like classical rhetoric, did not begin as a theory for composition, nor has its author, Kenneth Burke, fully approved its use as an invention technique (Burke, 1978). Burke is primarily a literary critic, and his theory was originally designed for probing "motives and motifs in human experience" (Young, 1976), particularly human experience as set forth in literature. Yet dramatism, with its "pentad" of key elements--act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose--and the "ratios" or interactions among these elements, has also proved a fruitful and powerful heuristic for generating ideas for writing about human acts. Unfortunately, however, the pentad has found its way into very few composition texts, and the ratios into even fewer. This neglect of dramatism by composition texts is doubtless due chiefly to its complexity.

Used properly, the pentad is a sophisticated device for exploring beneath the surface, for probing a situation or act in great depth to discover that which would not be revealed by a superficial inquiry. It is a method for opening up fresh possibilities, for generating ideas, not for selecting among them. One of the few texts which does include dramatism cautions that the "ideas which emerge may not lead directly to [a] thesis for writing" (Cowan & Cowan, 1980). Because the pentad is so powerful as a generative device, it may evoke ideas which are novel and interesting enough to "select themselves" as topics for writing. It does not, however, include actual methods for selection.

Like classical rhetoric and dramatism, tagmemic invention also has its roots not in composition theory but in yet another language discipline, linguistics. However, unlike the former two theories, tagmemics owes its adaptation to composition pedagogy in large part to the originator of the theory, Kenneth Pike. Pike developed the concepts of tagmemics as a system for analyzing the structures of foreign languages. He soon became convinced that the theory also applied to human behavior in general, and next, that it might be adapted to the field of rhetorical invention. After exploratory adaptations by Pike and others (e.g., English, 1964; Pike, 1964; Young & Becker, 1965), Pike collaborated with Young and and Becker to write a rhetoric textbook based on tagmemics (1970). In this text the "tagmemic heuristic" appears,

the central heuristic device of tagmemic rhetoric. This heuristic is a matrix composed of "cells" which are the result of combining three "aspects of a unit"—contrast, variation, and distribution--along the horizontal axis, with three ways of viewing a "unit of experience"—particle, wave, and field--along the vertical axis (p. 127). The tagmemic heuristic has been both praised as brilliant and faulted for being confusing and redundant, and several writers (e.g., Kneupper, 1980) have developed revisions of the heuristic.

One fact about the heuristic is indisputable, however: it is capable of generating a large amount of information about a subject from a variety of points of view. In fact, the textbook claims that exploration through the heuristic "in theory at least . . . can be carried on indefinitely; the process is open-ended" (p. 130). Several others acknowledge this aspect of tagmemic invention. English (1964), for example, says that the technique should leave the writer "in the position . . . of having to choose from an abundance of ideas" (p. 39, emphasis added). Of the several ways of dealing with selection in tagmemics-based presentations (select before using the heuristic which cells to use; do not select—use all the information generated; depend upon intuition), the most valid way of dealing with it seems to be to acknowledge that tagmemics itself is not a selective theory. When tagmemics is used as an invention method, selection must be

dealt with separately. Tagmemic invention generates an abundance of material, but it leaves to the individual user the task of choosing from that abundance.

Pre-writing is the only one of the four theories of invention which was actually developed as a theory for improving writing and writing instruction (Rohman & Wiecke, 1964). It grew out of a desire to see whether "real involvement" with writing could be achieved in a composition course, and if so, whether such involvement would produce better writing (p. 3). The researchers believed that too little attention had been given in the past to what happened before actual writing began; they were interested in "the stage of discovery in the writing process when a person transforms a 'subject' into his own categories" (pp. 12-13). In the experimental course in which pre-writing was tested, the researchers used three methods to promote "writing-as-discovery": the journal, a preliminary tool for discovering one's areas of interest; and two techniques for writing about specific subjects: the meditation and the analogy.

Pre-writing is also the only one of the four theories which includes a selection component. In addition to teaching students to generate material, the researchers emphasized the need to discover a "point of urgency" or "seed idea" in a subject (pp. 55-56). Yet this selection element has several limitations. First, it was introduced after half a term of readings, guided

discussions and journal writing. Thus it may be based upon a sequence of events difficult to reproduce. Secondly, material was generated in response to specific questions provided by the researchers, not through a widely adaptable heuristic procedure. And finally, the selection component was not included in the instructions for writing the meditation or the analogy: students had to incorporate the concepts for finding the seed idea into the pre-writing methods on their own.

The influence of Rohman's pre-writing on the teaching of composition has been felt mainly in an increased awareness of the value of self-discovery in the writing process, and in a heightened consciousness of the process itself, rather than in the use of a particular method or methods. Pre-writing (now usually written without the hyphen) has been generalized to signify any activity that precedes writing the first draft of an essay: it is no longer Rohman's theory borrowed and adapted by others but a way of approaching writing and the teaching of writing which has come into national currency.

Only a few prewriting techniques, however, deal with selection; most concentrate solely on generation. In fact, the most popular methods of the prewriting school, journal-keeping and freewriting, are both highly generative and highly likely to produce the involvement with the subject that Rohman sought; yet because they are normally used in a non-directed way, without

specific heuristics to guide the writing, selection often presents real difficulties.

Among those in the prewriting school, aside from Rohman, Elbow (1973, 1981) offers the most highly developed techniques for selection. In his first text, he presents many "cooking" techniques, including "external cooking," designed to help the writer find the "center of gravity" in a piece of writing; and in his 1981 text he adds more techniques, such as "loop writing." Other writers have presented similar methods of selection (e.g., Coe, 1981; Cowan & Cowan, 1980). Methods based on, or related to, the theory of pre-writing offer far more assistance in selection than do methods based on the other theories of invention. Yet even these are beset by certain limitations: Rohman's method lacks flexibility and adaptability; it is too closely tied to a specific reading list and course outline. Elbow's "center of gravity" and its derivative methods, except for "external cooking," rely too heavily on spontaneous insight; and "external cooking," by its developer's own admission, is too mechanical for anything but "desperation writing" (1973, p. 61). Furthermore, it may not lead to a single focus for writing. Thus, even though the methods of pre-writing (and prewriting) do include selection to a far greater degree than do methods based on the other theories, the need still remains for a method of selection which is adaptable to a wide variety of writing tasks and classroom

contexts, which is teachable and sequential without being mechanical, and which results in a single focus for writing. Focusing in the composing process seems to offer such a method.

The Theory of Focusing

The theory on which focusing in the composing process is based is a psychotherapeutic technique for discovering the center or crux of a personal difficulty, around which the details of the situation then appear rearranged in a more comprehensible pattern. It involves not merely cognitive understanding (which usually follows focusing) but rather an internal experience of the difficulty and then of its center, followed by a release of tension and a new bodily-felt impression of the situation. It was inductively derived through Gendlin's observations of successful therapy patients, and then codified into a sequential form which other patients could learn. In therapy, the setting usually involves two people, the focuser and a non-judgmental "listener," who asks the probe questions (for the best version of these questions, see Gendlin, 1982) and guides the focuser back to a bodily-sensed experience of the situation if he or she begins analyzing it instead. When an individual has internalized the technique of focusing, he or she may focus alone. Most focusers agree, however, that the method is more effective with the help of a listener.

The technique is extremely flexible. It may be used along with other therapeutic techniques, and it has been adapted to many other fields as well (e.g., business, education, health care, sports). In the field of composition, Sondra Perl has developed an excellent set of guidelines (unpublished) which adapts Gendlin's focusing to writing instruction. Her guidelines, however, assume a complete freedom of choice of subjects, and seem most likely to produce personal writing. This researcher's adaptation is designed to be not one method but many, to accommodate a wide variety of writing purposes and assignments, yet to employ a single basic process.

The researcher had initially determined that the theory of focusing in the composing process must be broadly applicable to various types of writing and that it must provide a means of discovering the writer's true center of interest or focal point within the subject, rather than simply being a method for "choosing a topic." The final initial criterion was that the theory must not be "mere theory" in the sense of sounding good on paper but being unusable or ineffective in practical applications: it must work. Research in rhetorical criticism and related fields as well as experience in developing and using the theory of focusing in the composing process revealed several other principles. It seemed clear that an adequate theory should include or embody a process orientation to composing; attention to

the incubation of ideas and, ideally, a way to speed the incubation process toward illumination or insight; an integration of right and left brain hemisphere thinking; and freewriting as a technique for this integration. Research also confirmed the importance of self-discovery in writing and the need for focusing topics, rather than simply "selecting" them.

In addition, many principles for using focusing in the composing process became clear during the course of field testing the theory. Among these is the importance of a classroom atmosphere of openness and receptivity. Students should feel free to express their thoughts and feelings without fear of being judged. They should also be aware of the purpose of the invention stage in composing: to explore a subject widely, not to write a draft of a paper. They should know not to be judgmental toward the ideas that come to them during the focusing process, irrelevant though they may seem at the time. Focusing releases a type of thinking (associated with the right brain hemisphere) which sees connections where the "logical" mind (the left brain hemisphere) may not at first see them. Ideally, students should also be accustomed to freewriting; in focusing in the composing process, freewriting becomes the alternative to therapeutic focusing's method of talking to a non-judgmental listener. Also it should be clear from the outset, especially if the subject is a personal one, that the writing produced in focusing is for the

students' benefit, not to be turned in unless they choose to share it. If the teacher wishes to use focusing as a preliminary exercise for discussion, for example, with a piece of literature, students may be asked to share parts of their responses aloud or in groups. However, it cannot be too strongly urged that focusing not be used as a means of evaluation. Therefore, students should never be forced to turn in their focusing responses, since to some students a teacher's simply seeing a paper implies judgment. The first several times focusing in the composing process is used, it should be led orally by the teacher, who should, if at all possible, do the exercise along with the students. Once students are familiar with focusing and are able to do it easily, the teacher may choose to give the class written instructions so that each person may go through the exercise at his or her own rate.

As the exercises below indicate, all focusing begins with relaxing. Some teachers may simply wish to say, "Now relax for a minute before we begin," and then allow time for students to relax. A more guided approach is offered in a technique called "centering" (Hendricks & Wills, 1975), which the researcher and others have used successfully with focusing. Though focusing in the composing process may be reduced to a single basic pattern, this simplified version will have little meaning to someone who has not been through the process using more specific patterns, such as those which follow.

These directions are not intended to be read verbatim when given orally. They may, however, be used as handouts after students are familiar with focusing. These patterns are by no means exhaustive of the possibilities for using focusing in the composing process, but they represent some of the most common types of writing which students in upper high school and college composition courses are required to do.

I. Focusing on a personal recollection:

(Before beginning the exercise, spend a few minutes dividing your life thus far into about seven segments.)

1. Relax.
2. In your imagination, go through each of the stages of your life one by one. Sense each one as a whole.
3. Which one attracts you now? Which one seems to call you to return and explore it? Let one "choose you."
4. Put yourself back into that time. Visualize the people who were important to you then, the places, the sounds, smells, tastes, feelings, events, objects. What was on your mind at that time of your life? What marked the transition into that time, out of it? Spend time remembering, and then freewrite.
5. Read over what you have written and put check marks beside things (e.g., people, events) that stand out. Then choose the one that stands out most vividly.

6. See this one thing (person, event) as a whole. Really try to hold the whole thing in your mind at once. Then let your attention be attracted by one thing. "Zoom in" on that one thing and freewrite.
7. Repeat step 6 as many times as desired.
8. What's the crux of the whole thing, the center or key to it? Freewrite.

II. Focusing on literature:

1. Relax.

--If the piece of literature is read in class:

2. Read or listen to the story (essay, etc.).
3. How does the story (essay) make you feel? What is your initial reaction? Freewrite.
4. See the whole thing as a moving mural or panorama. Then zoom in on one thing that attracts your Attention. Freewrite.

--If the piece of literature has been read outside class:

2. Recall how you felt at various times while reading; after you finished. Freewrite.
3. Recreate the parts of the book (story) in your mind. See them one by one as a panorama.
4. Look at the whole panorama. Then zoom in on one thing that attracts your attention. Freewrite.

5. Repeat step 4 as desired.
6. What in your own experience might have prepared you to respond as you do? Does anything in this book (story) remind you of an experience you've had? Freewrite.
7. What's at the heart of the whole thing? What's really the key to it? (The "whole thing" may be the piece of literature or the student's particular response to it. This question may need to be discussed after the exercise for the benefit of those who do not understand it initially.)

III. Focusing on an assigned subject:

1. Relax.
2. What are your associations with the subject? Freewrite.
3. How do you feel about the subject? Freewrite.
4. See the whole subject as it now appears to you as a mural or panorama. Or see it as a scrapbook full of pictures. Look at each part or picture.
5. Look at the panorama, mural, or scrapbook as a whole. Try to get a sense of the whole thing; then zoom in on one thing that attracts your attention. Freewrite.
6. Repeat step 5 as desired.

7. What in your own experience might have prepared you to respond as you do? Freewrite.
8. What's the crux of the whole thing, the key to it?

IV. Focusing for a comparison/contrast paper:

(This is an example of how focusing may be used with a particular type of essay development. Patterns for definition, classification, process, cause/effect, and other development types have also been formulated.)

1. Relax.
2. Say the following sentences to yourself and wait for answers that "feel right." Get several answers for each sentence. The freewrite for each answer.
   a. Though it may seem strange at first, _____ and _____ are really very similar.
   b. Though it may seem that _____ and _____ would be very similar, they are actually quite different.
3. Look at your freewriting on each answer. Which one stands out most vividly? Let one "choose you."
4. Take the one thing that stood out and see it as a whole. Freewrite.
5. Again, see the whole thing. Then zoom in on one thing that stands out. Freewrite.

6. Repeat step 5 as desired.
7. What in your life might have caused you to see this as you do? Freewrite.
8. What's the crux of it, the main thing?

   Or use one of the following sentences, again waiting for an answer that "feels right."

   a. The real key to this likeness is . . . .

   b. The real difference between these two . . . .

V. Focusing for a persuasive paper:

1. Relax.
2. During the past weeks or months, what subjects or issues have bothered you, intrigued you, aroused your curiosity, your anger, your sense of irony? Freewrite briefly on several.
3. Look over what you've written and try to sense each subject as a whole. Which one stands out, most arouses your interest now?
4. Take the subject you have chosen and see it as a whole. See the people involved, the events, the objects associated with this subject. If you have firsthand experience of the subject, put yourself back into a typical scene. If not, imagine one. Mentally create a mural or panorama of the subject.

5. See the whole thing. Then zoom in on one thing that attracts your attention. Freewrite.
6. Repeat step 6 as desired.
7. What in your life might have prepared you to respond as you do? Freewrite.
8. Take first your side of the issue and then the other side, exploring both (or several) points of view. Continue alternating sides as necessary. Freewrite.
9. What's really the crux of this issue? What really separates the two sides? (or) What's the best argument for either side?

After a first focusing exercise with a particular group of students, if the exercise has been properly conducted, it is safe to assume that the majority of the class will have received some new insights on the subject, a few people will have responded extremely well, and a few will be confused. This is the best time to teach the techniques of focusing. The researcher has typically begun follow-up discussions by asking such questions as "How did that work for you? What stood out vividly?" After several people for whom the method worked well have read or talked about their responses, those who had difficulty focusing should begin to recognize what went wrong for them. In the researcher's experience, those students are most successful in focusing who use

the method in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Ask but don't answer. That is, do not search for or force answers. Instead, hold each question in mind and wait receptively for an answer.

2. Receive what comes: don't reject anything. Set aside preconceived notions about what is and what is not pertinent to the subject; assume that logical connections will be made later.

3. Let specific things choose you. Try to hold "the whole thing" in mind rather than trying to choose. Let things stand out of their own accord.

4. Value your imagery. When a visual (or other sensory) image comes to you, pay attention to it; notice the details.

5. Learn to recognize your felt sense (Gendlin's term for the entire system's awareness) of a subject. Learn to follow intuitive leads.

These suggestions are tantamount to saying, "Learn to use your right brain hemisphere." Focusing is a technique which encourages the type of thinking associated with the right brain, but some people are reluctant to trust such intuitive, sensory answers. Discussions following focusing exercises can help to dispel this distrust. Once students have been through two or three sessions of focusing in the composing process, it may be helpful to point out that all focusing follows a basic pattern: (1) Relax; (2) make an initial intuitive response; (3) see the

whole thing and let one thing stand out; (4) repeat the previous step as desired; (5) ask what has prepared you to respond as you do; and (6) ask for the key to the whole thing. Variations in the pattern are generally at the beginning and involve setting the stage for writing on a particular subject or for a particular purpose.

According to Lauer (1979) a heuristic procedure should have transcendency, flexible direction, and generative capacity. Focusing appears to have all three. It is transcendent in that it may be used with a wide range of writing situations, since its "operations . . . transcend the subject; they do not arise from it" (p. 268). Focusing has flexible direction in that it follows a clearly defined sequence, yet may be used recursively. It has generative capacity in a broad sense in that it helps writers generate a large amount of material. Though each focusing exercise does not include all the operations that Lauer says "have been identified as triggers of insight" (p. 269), a given exercise may include any which the writer (or teacher) decides to use. Some operations (e.g., visualizing) are always included.

Two criteria are missing from Lauer's list of qualities: selectivity (though selectivity figured strongly in Lauer's 1967 evaluation of rhetorical theories) and usability. Comments by teachers and students indicate that focusing has both. One teacher, for example, in responding to a questionnaire which was

used in the field testing, said that at least ninety percent of her students were able to find topics for papers through focusing. Another said that focusing "deals directly with . . . the two primary problems with content--pinpointing a thesis and providing vivid details." Many other teachers have made similar comments. Focusing in the composing process is a theory of invention which includes both generation and selection of material in a single coherent process. It appears to be usable: no teacher has ever been requested to use focusing, yet many have and attest to their success with it.

Much research remains to be done to determine, for example, the effectiveness of focusing with particular types of writing; its effectiveness as compared to that of other theories; the effectiveness of combining focusing with other theories (suggestions are made in the study as to how such consolidations might be made); the long-term effectiveness of instruction in focusing; and the effectiveness of focusing on attitudes toward writing. In addition to this experimental research, further basic research should be done to adapt focusing to other types of writing, for example, business and technical writing. Finally, informal classroom research by teachers who learn of focusing may be carried out independently of formal research. It is this research, under the name of teaching, which will ultimately determine the value of focusing in the composing process.

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